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The MGA and Universiti Utara are working together to produce world champions.

UNIVERSITI Utara Malaysia, in Sintok, Kedah, and the Malaysia Golf Association recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding designed specifically to help develop the game in the northern region of the country.

It comes after UUM took the initiative of setting up its own training centre, which was dubbed the UUM National Golf Academy.

In many ways, the academy completed the road map for the development of golf in the region and it sits nicely with a growing sport that now also enjoys world recognition with tournaments like the co-sanctioned US PGA Tour's CIMB Classic, European Tour's Maybank Malaysian Open and the Sime Darby LPGA.

Despite the layout at UUM being a nine-hole course, its natural surroundings and playing conditions make for golfers wanting to come back for more.

The golf programmes at the academy are well structured and new ones are to be introduced for future intakes of students.

At the recent signing of the MOU between UUM and MGA, the university said in a statement: "The entry requirements for talented students will be more flexible. And to support the development further of young golfers, the UUM National Golf Academy will soon introduce a



The UUM course is a nine-hole layout.

diploma in golf management."

Last September, the academy, together with the MGA, formed a partnership with Ramkhamhaeng University in Thailand, which has its own golf academy.

In line with its objectives, UUM has various golf management and advance skills programmes introduced in its annual calendar of events.

The responsibility to fulfill the academy's objectives is in the good hands of its director, Associate Prof Azmi Shaari, who said that all their activities are grouped under three main categories: systematic

The training programmes aim to help amateur golfers become pros

— PROF AZMI SHAARI



MGA and UUM officials at the signing ceremony.

training, research and academic programmes.

Through these training programmes it is hoped amateur golfers will move on to become professionals.

Indeed, after two intakes and where the students are fully sponsored under the Centre of Excellence project of the Ministry of Higher Education and cooperation with MGA, they have shown good progress and achievements.

In 2010, some of the students brought home silver medals from the Asean University Golf Championships at Chiang Mai, Thailand. A year later they also represented Malaysia at the Asian University Golf Championships in

Hua Hin, Thailand and at the World University Golf Championships at Mission Hills, China.

This year they are expected to travel to the latter in Europe.

In local events, the students, who fall under the guidance of head instructor Wan Rosni Wan Chik, also excelled.

One in particular has been the Kedah Amateur Open, where Muhammad Wafiyuddin emerged as the individual champion in both 2010 and 2011.

The academy's director added: "Some of us may still be skeptical about its ability as an academy because golf is still not a very popular sport amongst Malaysians

compared to badminton or football. Badminton earned us silver medals at the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games.

"So we could use squash as a successful model to manage golf as Nicol David has been the number one player in the world for the last few years. As a result, squash is now recognised as a national sport.

"Golf is similar to squash in many ways, as it is an individual sport and if we can produce one or two top players, we can break the psychological barrier.

"One of the academy's aims is to generate a suitable module or system for training which can produce future champions," he added.

UUM players with their trophies.

